St John HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Pro Utilitate

Preserving and promoting St John heritage

Newsletter of the St John Ambulance Historical Society of Australia

Issue August 2026

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Operating Policy The Society's Constitution has been revised in collaboration with the Chancellor and CEO, and this new document, now known as an 'Operating Policy', was presented to members at the AGM on 24 June, 2026. It was endorsed unanimously, with just two suggestions for amendment. Members will be separately emailed a copy of the Policy when it is finalised. Importantly, this new Policy firmly embeds our Society as a constituent part of the Priory, and it ensures that we follow modern governance practices.

Committee Following voting at the AGM, the membership of the Historical Society Committee is now: Dr David Fahey (President), Bill Bunton (Secretary), Paul Copeland (Treasurer), Dr Matthew Glozier (Priory Librarian), Dr Elizabeth Ellis, Bob DeVere, Brodie Taylor, Leah Cooper, and Peter Gill. Thanks to all for your willingness to step up and support the work of the Historical Society. Please see the final page of this newsletter for a complete list of contacts.

New Patron My warmest congratulations to Dr Ian Howie-Willis, who was nominated to be our new Patron. This nomination was supported unanimously at the AGM, and has been subsequently approved by the Chancellor. Ian replaces our previous Patron, Dr Neil Conn, who has received a letter of thanks from the Committee.

Sven Nilsson Scholarship The Historical Society has received an incredibly generous bequest from the late Sven Nilsson CStJ. This funding will enable a youth member from St John (NSW) to attend and participate in, the annual seminar for many years to come. I will be able to give more detail about this in the next issue of *PU*.

Website Our website history.stjohn.org.au has been significantly enhanced this year. Hopefully this has now built up into a 'critical mass' of material to function as a history and heritage resource for the whole St John organisation. Anyone can use the website to:

- access one of the many books written on St John history, or the St John History journal, to read about a subject in depth
- look up something specific
- spend an hour or two happily browsing.

A significant number of the books written about our history are now out of print. Many of those published by the Order of St John in Australia have been scanned and made available as PDFs so that these valuable resources can still be used. Similarly, many of the previous clinical, ceremonial, cadet, and administration manuals are now available online. I am working with other Priories to gain copyright permission to include some books published overseas—so far, permission has been received from New Zealand and Canada for their centenary histories to be made available. In several areas of the website, links are provided to the website of the Order of St John Museum (London) – one important example is the link to PDFs of all the editions of *First Aid to the Injured*, from 1878 to 1957.

Past issues of our journal *St John History* (volumes 1 to 21) are online. There is a twelve-month delay from publication of a new volume to its appearing online, to enhance the value of Society membership (financial members receive a hard copy of each issue). I have produced an index showing each volume's contents page, and papers listed by author, to facilitate searching for a particular topic. The international journal *One St John* (volumes 1 to 9) is also online.

Videos of the previous five years of seminar presentations can be accessed through the website. I hope that this will be an enjoyable resource for individuals and groups to use. Thanks to Shay McAuley and team, for recording and editing these videos.

The 'people' section of the website now has a number of entries, but I would like to highlight the 'Commissioners' pages. We now have (mostly) complete coverage of our past Chief Commissioners, and State/Territory Commissioners, and I thank all who have contributed to this. It's quite breathtaking to review the history of our Commissioners. Our organisation has been well served by such pre-eminent men and women! I want to develop the 'people' section much further—please volunteer your interest to write about a particular group/category, or about an inspirational individual. This does not need to link to a seminar presentation.

The 'museum' section will be the focus of development for the rest of the year. Some of the key artefacts held in the Priory collection are already online, with many more to follow. This will include clinical history. I'm hoping that state/territory museums might also contribute here.

One of the most important functions of our website is that it links to the membership page. Anyone wanting to join the Society can simply go to history.stjohn.org.au, and click on 'membership'. Please encourage as many people as possible to join!

Dr David Fahey AM CStJ, President

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

The Historical Society of Australia has been honoured with a number of promotions in the Order recently:
Dame of Justice Anne Demaine (Qld)
Dame of Grace (DStJ) Sue Campbell-Lloyd AM (NSW)
Commander (CStJ) Elizabeth Ellis, Matthew Glozier (NSW), Kylie Seidel (ACT), and Bob Devere (Qld)
Member (MStJ Ben Lynch (Deputy Chair Qld) and Brodie Taylor (Honorary Archivist Qld)

KING'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS

• Mrs Ethel May Batten OAM OStJ • Mr Desmond Alwyn Schirmer OAM • Dr Christopher Johnson Verco OAM RFD KStJ • Mr Mohammed Shabbir Alam OAM MStJ • Ms Margaret Gayle Whittaker OStJ OAM • Mr Deane Michael Coxall ASM • Ms Karen Anne Hollings ASM

NEW DEPUTY PRIOR FROM OUR RANKS

Congratulations to the new Governor of Tasmania (right), and Deputy Prior, Her Excellency the Honourable Caroline Wells, who assumed office on 17 June. The appointment is noteworthy in that Her Excellency achieved the Grand Prior's Award when she was a St John Cadet.





Drs Matthew Glozier CStJ, David Fahey CStJ, and Elizabeth Ellis CStJ.



Elizabeth Ellis also with Sue Campbell-Lloyd DStJ and Kerry Hall DStJ.



Kylie Seidel CStJ with the Governor General, Her Excellency the Hon Ms Sam Mostyn AC DStJ.



At the June 2026 investiture at Government House: Dr Kathryn Zeitz CStJ, Kylie Seidel CStJ, Chancellor Cameron Oxley GCStJ, Her Excellency Hon. Ms Sam Mostyn AC DStJ, Priory Dean The Very Revd Dr Andreas Loewe CStJ, Brigadier Phil Winter MStJ, and Priory Secretary Brendan Maher.

INAUGURAL AUSTRALIAN VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

St John National Youth Officer, Dr Felix Ho OStJ, was awarded the Inaugural Australian Volunteer of the Year! Felix has been in the volunteer role of National Youth Officer for 6 years. This is a great recognition of his work with us, and the other organisations he volunteers for. Felix was instrumental in the success of last year's History Seminar with a Youth Movement theme which celebrated the centenary of cadets in Australia.



VALE – SVEN CHRISTIAN NILSSON CSTJ

28/06/1957–10/04/2026

Edited from the Eulogy given by Professor Mark Compton AM GCStJ, Lord Prior, Order of St John at St John's Anglican Church, Glebe NSW on 21 April 2026

Sven was an amazing individual. A committed and exemplary healthcare professional and volunteer; highly intelligent; a skilled and dedicated Registered Nurse; a compassionate and empathetic leader in healthcare; a loving husband, father, grandfather and family man and a very competent beekeeper and preserve maker amongst his myriad talents.

Sven's St John career progressed rapidly. After leading the Cadet Division, he went onto lead the Glebe Adult Division, then Regional Superintendent and then on to the State Staff. It was from this appointment as a Statewide leader that he had an exceptional impact on the current and future leadership capabilities of St John in NSW. Sven was appointed in 1988 as the State Officer to lead the Cadet Movement in NSW. Sven's goal was to lift this group and its leaders in energy and expertise with a vision for a vibrant future. It had an enormous impact on the organisation, its people and importantly the communities in which cadet groups were active.

In a similar vein, evidence the next great project, the University of Sydney Division. In Sven's words from the Historical Society interview:

> (In 1995) I was given 6 months by (the then NSW Commissioner) John Spencer to make progress when I put forward the plan for the University Division; I had done my research on groups like this in England. We would recruit at University Open Day and rapidly went from 12 members to 60 and eventually to 120. I still have contact with many very successful people who went through our division.



Sven celebrating the 100-year anniversary of Glebe Ambulance Cadet Division with his grand-daughter Jennifer Jane. 1 December 2025.

This Sydney University Division of St John was outstanding in quantity and quality. I have a recollection that its strength hit approximately 160 members at one point. It was a major contributor to St John's response to major community events like the ANZAC Day March, New Year's Eve, Royal Easter Show, City to Surf etc. The success was not just in the rigour of training and the opportunity to make serious contributions to community, but it also came from the humanness of the leadership that Sven (and Debbie) brought to the task. The care for each member, the social events; weaving a human, caring, compassionate thread through the membership; making people feel needed, wanted, valued—real leadership resulted in real impact.

So, let us remember the lessons Sven taught us; always fight for those who we serve and for whom we care; our members or colleagues and our organisation. Be courageous and raise issues, ideas, concerns without fear or favour; invest time, energy and resources in developing people; encourage diversity and celebrate it as a source of organisational strength.

COMING EVENTS

WEBINAR—CARING FOR YOUR ST JOHN COLLECTION

Wednesday 26 August 2026, 7.30-9.00 pm

Presented by Brodie Taylor MStJ, Curator, University of Southern Queensland

Every St John item has a story to tell. Whether it's a century-old certificate, a service medal, a photograph, a uniform, or a handwritten record, these objects preserve the rich history and heritage of the Order of St John. But how do we ensure they survive for future generations?

Join us for an informative webinar exploring the practical principles of caring for your St John historical collections. Drawing on professional archival and museum conservation practices, this session will provide practical guidance on handling, cataloguing, storing and preserving documents, photographs, books, medals, insignia, textiles and other historical artefacts.

The webinar will cover:

- Safe handling and preservation techniques.
- Understanding provenance and original order.
- Creating an effective collection inventory.
- Ideal storage environments and archival materials.
- Caring for paper, photographs, books, medals and textiles.
- Recognising when professional conservation is required.

Whether you are responsible for a State collection, a Divisional archive, or simply wish to preserve your own St John memorabilia, this session will provide practical, achievable advice to help safeguard our shared heritage.

Brodie Taylor MStJ JP (Qual), BCRA (Hons), FRSA, FSA Scot, FLS, FIML, GAICD
Curator (Arts and Exhibitions), University of Southern Queensland

If you have a specific question you would like Brodie to answer, please email the History Secretary before the webinar, and Brodie will endeavour to have an answer for you during session.

SAVE THE DATE AND LOG-IN DETAILS TO YOUR CALENDAR

Join Zoom Meeting https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83846085927?pwd=VaJtXDSi0amAmSqS3C8mfJCfRe8a4D.1

Meeting chat link https://us06web.zoom.us/launch/jc/83846085927

Meeting ID 838 4608 5927 **Passcode** 900515

One tap mobile

+13602095623,,83846085927#,,,,*900515# US +13863475053,,83846085927#,,,,*900515# US

Join by SIP 83846085927@zoomcrc.com
Join instructions https://us06web.zoom.us/meetings/83846085927/invitations?signature=O_hD2AmKN3SWS2i30SVBbZYLhKmAyu91bmB1iJU25rA

A PRECIOUS FIRST AID CERTIFICATE

This example of a First Aid Certificate from 1916 shows typical signs of damage and deterioration. Following is some advice about preserving documents like this, written by Brodie Taylor, a professionally trained museum curator. In the next issue of *PU*, Dr David Fahey will comment on historical information about St John and the named individuals that appear on the certificate


St. John Ambulance Association,
BEING THE AMBULANCE DEPARTMENT OF
The Grand Priory of the Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem in England.
Patron:
HIS MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY KING GEORGE V.
Grand Prior:
Field-Marshal His Royal Highness THE DUKE OF CONNAUGHT, K.G.
NEW SOUTH WALES CENTRE.
This is to Certify that Ada Speech
has attended a course of Instruction at the Gunnedah Branch
of the St. John Ambulance Association, and is qualified to render "First Aid to the Injured."
Sydney, July 19th 1916

A St John Ambulance First Aid to the Injured certificate issued in 1916 is an important historical document that requires appropriate conservation and storage to ensure its long-term preservation.

Condition assessment The certificate exhibits several forms of deterioration consistent with its age. Creases indicate repeated folding and handling, weakening the paper fibres and increasing the risk of tearing. Surface dirt accretion has accumulated through handling and

environmental exposure, while foxing is evident as brown spotting caused by prolonged exposure to moisture, high humidity, mould activity, or impurities within the paper.

Paper records are among the most common archival materials and are manufactured from plant fibres such as cotton, flax, or wood pulp. As wood pulp ages it becomes increasingly acidic, contributing to yellowing, embrittlement, and general deterioration.

Storage and preventive conservation Historic documents should be stored in archival-quality, acid-free folders within appropriately sized archival boxes that provide structural support and protection from light, dust, and handling. Enclosures should never be overfilled, and similar-sized items should be stored together to minimise physical damage.

Prior to rehousing, damaging materials including staples, paperclips, rubber bands, and acidic folders should be removed. Fragile or significant documents should be housed in inert polyester (DuPont Melinex/Mylar) sleeves to provide additional support while reducing handling.

Highly acidic materials, such as newspapers, should be stored separately to prevent acid migration. Folded documents should not be flattened without professional conservation, as weakened fibres may fracture during handling. Likewise, original documents should never be heat laminated, as the process causes irreversible damage and prevents future conservation treatment.

Conservation treatment The certificate can be stabilised by a qualified paper conservator. Surface dirt may be reduced through dry-cleaning methods, folds can often be relaxed under controlled humidification, and tears repaired using reversible conservation materials. Foxing may be reduced in some cases, although complete removal is rarely achievable or desirable. Conservation aims to stabilise the document while preserving its authenticity rather than restoring it to a new appearance.

Framing and digitisation If displayed, the certificate should be conservation framed using acid-free mount board, UV-filtering glazing, and reversible mounting techniques. Adhesives and pressure-sensitive tapes should never be applied directly to the document, and prolonged exposure to sunlight should be avoided.

High-resolution scanning is an essential preservation strategy. Digital surrogates minimise handling of the original while providing a permanent record for research, reproduction, and public access. Although digitisation does not replace conservation, it significantly contributes to the long-term preservation of the document.

Appropriate preventive conservation, archival storage, professional treatment where necessary, and digitisation together provide the most effective means of preserving this 1916 St John Ambulance certificate for future generations.

OTHER COMING EVENTS

Grand Council, 7–11 September 2026

The next Grand Council meeting of the Venerable Order has had to be moved from Nairobi, Kenya to London, UK due to the threat of the Ebola virus in East Africa.

28th Historical Society Seminar, Saturday 10 October

We're delighted to confirm the date of our Society's Seminar is Saturday 10 October at the Realm Hotel in Canberra. Call for papers and registration details were issued on 1 July 2026.

Message from the Australian Office of St John: 'We are pleased to advise that our annual meetings and events have moved to October (instead of November) to help relieve the pressure traditionally experienced in November and allow more members and volunteers the opportunity to attend'.

Program overview

Friday 9 October 2026
- National Group Meetings

Saturday 10 October 2026
- Women's Networking Breakfast
- Historical Society History Seminar
- National Group Meetings
- Annual Chancellor's Dinner

Sunday 11 October 2026
- Priory Chapter Meeting
- Church Service

Venue All events will be held at Hotel Realm.

Accommodation Accommodation is at Hotel Realm and the Burbury hotel. If you would like to book accommodation early, please use the

relevant booking code: Hotel Realm Code: STJO091026_001; Burbury Hotel Code: STJO091026

Registrations and tickets All events must be registered for individually.

- Breakfast 'Call to Action' https://www.trybooking.com/DLUAX
- 28th Annual St John Historical Society Seminar https://www.trybooking.com/DLUAP
- 4th Annual Chancellor's Dinner, 'Her Impact. Our Future'. https://www.trybooking.com/DLUAG

Any questions, please contact priory@stjohn.org.au or call Kylie Seidel or Gabby Lhuede on (02) 6295 3777.

A MOMENT IN HISTORY

This historic photograph of the King and Queen, together with the Australian Governor General, State Governors, and Territory Administrator, was taken on 21 October 2024, during Their Majesties' visit to Australia (the first undertaken during His Majesty's reign).

Obviously, this picture is of historical and constitutional significance to the Commonwealth of Australia. However, it depicts an equally historical moment for the Priory in Australia of the Order of St John.

This is a pictorial representation of the senior governance of the Order of St John in Australia. The King is Sovereign Head of the Order of St John worldwide. The Governor General is the Prior of the Priory in Australia, and the State Governors and Territory Administrator are each Deputy Priors. Western Australia is different in that it is a Commandery (a separate entity but dependent on the Priory in Australia). The Governor of Western Australia serves as the Knight Commander of the Commandery.

In Australia, St John is fortunate to receive enthusiastic vice-regal leadership and patronage. It is lovely to see that some members of the group chose to wear their St John insignia for this occasion.



Left to right: Her Excellency, Professor the Hon. Margaret Gardner AC DStJ, Governor of Victoria, Deputy Prior; Her Excellency, the Hon. Dr Jeanette Young AC PSM DStJ, Governor of Queensland, Deputy Prior; Her Excellency, the Hon. Barbara Baker AC DStJ, Governor of Tasmania, Deputy Prior (term of office concluded on 15 June 2026); Her Excellency, the Hon. Sam Mostyn AC DStJ, Governor General, Prior; His Majesty King Charles III; Her Majesty Queen Camilla; Her Excellency, the Hon. Margaret Beazley AC DStJ KC, Governor of NSW, Deputy Prior; Her Excellency, the Hon Frances Adamson AC DStJ, Governor of South Australia, Deputy Prior; His Excellency, the Hon. Christopher Dawson AC APM KStJ, Governor of Western Australia, Knight Commander; His Honour, Professor the Hon. Hugh Heggie AO PSM KStJ, Administrator of the Northern Territory, Deputy Prior (term of office concluded on 30 Jan 2026).

BEHIND THE SCENES OF THE NATIONAL COLLECTION

The AO was officially opened on 12 June 2026 by Cameron Oxley GCStJ (Chancellor) and Alicia Payne MP (representing Kristy McBain MP, Minister for Emergency Management). The official opening of the Australian National Office gave a wonderful opportunity for the showcasing of our showcases! Sorry couldn't resist it.



CEO Brendan Maher; Chancellor Cameron Oxley, and Alicia Payne MP.



The Priory Librarian Dr Matthew Glozier, President of the Historical Society Dr David Fahey,and Historical Society Secretary (and PU Editor) Dr Elizabeth Ellis.

We have an interesting historical comparison of the original plaque for the founding of our 1966 building with the plaque for the new office space 60 years apart. Read more at https://history.stjohn.org.au/foundation-stone/





Also, during the opening, the Lord Prior, Professor Mark Compton, presented our President, Dr David Fahey, one of his personal medallions to be included with the heritage collection.





JERUSALEM SCENE



The [St John of Jerusalem Eye] Hospital Group operates in one of the most challenging environments in the world, requiring exceptional leadership, resilience and dedication—qualities demonstrated so well by our staff, senior management team and Board of Trustees, whose work and achievements are reflected throughout this edition.

There is much encouraging news to share: increasing patient numbers, expanding services and ambitious plans for the future. Yet demand for our services continues to grow as rising costs, deepening poverty and high unemployment place increasing pressure on patients and their families.

In these pages [*Jerusalem Scene* Spring/Summer 2026], you will read about the many areas where support is urgently needed—from restoring services in Gaza and expanding patient subsidies in the West Bank, to modernising our hospitals and clinics and developing sustainable income-generating initiatives such as the Muristan Café.

Today, more than ever, charitable support is essential to sustaining and expanding our work. If you would like to support a particular aspect of our work, I would be delighted to speak with you about how your philanthropy could make a lasting difference.

I am also pleased to share that our Friends Scheme has launched and is already bringing together a growing community of supporters committed to saving sight and changing lives in the Holy Land. You can find out more about the Friends Scheme on our website: https://www.stjohneyehospital.org/friends-of-the-sjehg/

Thank you for your continued support. Quite simply, without your generosity, this work would not be possible. We remain united in our hopes and prayers for peace in the region, and for the safety of all our colleagues, patients and communities.

Harriet Wheeler
Executive Director, UK, St. John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group https://www.stjohneyehospital.org/

Dr Matthew Glozier CStJ, Priory Librarian

MUSEUM OF THE ORDER OF ST JOHN

The Museum of the Order of St John has just launched our free digital guide with Bloomberg Connects! For those who haven't dabbled before, Bloomberg Connects is a **free app** that allows you to explore hundreds of museums, galleries, sculpture parks and cultural spaces worldwide. It's available as an app on IOS and Android as well as on a web browser, and it functions as a personal, behind-the-scenes tour guide in your pocket, offering exclusive audio, video and expert commentary.

Check us out as you tour the galleries in the museum, or from the comfort of your own home—the whole app has been designed to encourage heritage exploration across the globe, so you don't have to be in the physical space to explore our content! Listen along to our guided tour of the Museum's highlights, check back to see what the Curators are up to behind the scenes, and if you're visiting us, don't forget to pick up a free bookmark or postcard!

You can download the app here, and happy exploring!

Rebecca Raven, Curator
Museum of the Order of St John, London

FROM THE ORDER'S LIBRARIAN

A few Library updates from the Order's international scene:

- Further digitisation of global St John resources has been continuing, and these are available here: https://issuu.com/museumoftheorderofstjohn
- The Museum has been working on the digital catalogue online, which can be accessed here: https://collectionsonline.museumstjohn.org.uk/home
- The Malta Study Center has started publishing material from the Museum library. You can access it here: https://www.vhmml.org/readingRoom by then selecting the Museum of the Order of St John as the Repository.

Todd Skilton OStJ JP, Order Librarian

AUSTRALIAN HERALDRY

STAINED-GLASS WINDOW DISPLAYING THE ARMORIAL BEARINGS OF SIR HUGH POATE

Sir Hugh Poate's Coat of Arms (armorial bearings) displayed below as a stained-glass panel, depicts a shield displaying an inverted blue chevron on a gold background, above which is a bar showing what appears to be two Australian parrots on either side of a central Tudor rose.

The Latin motto in the scroll below, 'Conabimur' means 'We will try to'. The bird atop the crowned helmet appears to be an Australian crested pigeon. Charles Campbell (Priory Secretary 1975–1997) said that this stained-glass had been a window in the Poate family home at 38 Victoria Road, Bellevue Hill, Sydney. Today, it is mounted on display at the Australia Office in Canberra.



Who was Sir Hugh Poate (1884–1961):

- St John Ambulance Brigade Commissioner in New South Wales, 1926–1941.
- Commander, Commandery of the Commonwealth of Australia (exclusive of Western Australia), 1941–1946. As Commander, Sir Hugh headed the first effective St John Ambulance federal structure in Australia.
- Inaugural Priory Chancellor, 1946–1961.

Source: https://history.stjohn.org.au/sir-hugh-poates-coat-of-arms/



Coat-of-arms of Frederick Poate FRAS, Surveyor-General and Chief Surveyor of NSW, father of Sir Hugh. ('Arthur Charles Fox-Davies' in *Armorial families: a directory of gentlemen of coat-armour*, Vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T.C. & E.C. Jack, 1905), p. 1566).



Sir Hugh Poate's Coat-of-arms, coloured with the addition of his heraldic and honorific entitlements, adapted by MR Glozier.

THE CHALLENGE(S)

A new challenge from our President, Dr David Fahey CStJ



Why are there five silver bars on this St John service medal?

Why are there two different designs on the silver bars?

PREVIOUS CHALLENGES

No. 1



This challenge was offered by Dr Fin MacNeill. As a hint it is housed in the throne room of the City Palace of Jaipur and awarded in 1912. Whose could it be? And does anyone have any further information on the awardee?

David Fahey tells us that this challenge is a 'Donat's Badge, which has the upper arm of the cross replaced by that gold shape. It was awarded to people who donated considerably—the words 'donat' and 'donor' have the same derivation.

And Malcolm Little adds that the St John Cross is a demi-cross awarded to Donats who donated to the Order. It came into existence in 1910 and was issued in gold, silver and bronze. Being in the Jaipur collection and in gold, I'm guessing it was awarded to the Maharaja of Jaipur.

No. 2

What were these badges (above right) awarded for?

Malcolm Little offers that the small one with 'HN' is for 'Home Nursing' and the larger is for completing the Medallion level first aid course. The date bar at the top represents the year it was awarded. Subsequent date bars were awarded each year the Medallion level of first aid was achieved.





Lesley King in the Northern Territory says, 'I have one of them—the second one illustrated. It came to me via our state nursing officer of that time, Mrs Marion Grayden, when she retired from service in the 1980s. I took over the NT SJA Nursing Officer role from her. The name on the medal is Marion J F Rowland—possibly her maiden name because she had been with us a long time when I joined. Marion had retired from nursing at that time but was overseeing our Home Nursing courses; so I would suggest the medal is primarily related to nursing qualifications. The inscription is on the back of the medal and there is no bar attached to the top of it, just a loop that suggests it was once attached to something. It was issued by the St John Ambulance Association and features the St John cross and the heraldic beasts between the arms of the cross. There is a number above the name -A147427 - and the medal was made in London. Does that help? Cheers, Lesley King DStJ.

And David Fahey writes that the badge on the left is a brass St John Ambulance Association First Aid Medallion with a 1960 label. The badge on the right is a Home Nursing pendant. Full information can be found at https://history.stjohn.org.au/first-aid-medallion/

No. 3



Who is this royal prince in Austrian uniform? And what St John badge is he wearing?

Malcolm Little: This is a photo, Malcolm LIttle tells us, of the royal Prince of Wales, the future George V. He was Grand Prior from 1901 to 1910. He is wearing an Austrian uniform with his Grand Prior's badge worn as a neck badge. He held Honorary rank in the Austro-Hungarian army. The photo was probably taken in 1904 when on a State Visit to Austria.

CLINICAL HISTORY QUIZ



THE TAIPAN VICTIM OF 1967

This photograph is from *A Century for Australia* (Howie-Willis 1983). It shows a critically-ill 46-year-old man who had been bitten by a taipan in the channel country of south-west Queensland on 15 September 1967.[1,2] He was attempting to catch the snake, while working as a tour guide. Against incredible odds, he survived—the significance of this is reflected in the media coverage it received on the front page of the *Adelaide Advertiser*.[3]

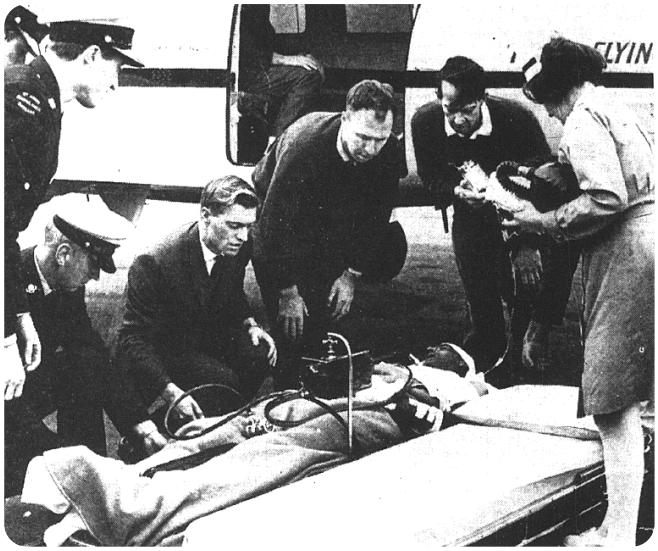
He was flown by Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) to Adelaide via Broken Hill. The picture shows St John ambulance officers about to transport him from Adelaide airport to hospital. At that time, surviving a taipan bite was very rare.

There was a lot to unpack from this photo! **Dr David Fahey** has offered the following clinical explanation.

First aid was given immediately: the wound was incised and sucked, and an arterial tourniquet applied. A tourniquet was the priority for snakebite at that time.[4] The current treatment of pressure bandages and immobilisation was not introduced until 1979,[5] even though the lymphatic movement of snake venom was understood by 1941.[6] The snake was initially misidentified as a common brown snake—it was killed and sent to an expert who, many days later, identified it as an inland taipan. 'Venom Identification Kits' were not described until 1979[7] (these permit identification of the venom using a small chemistry set and a swab taken from the bite site). Before these kits were available, identification of the snake itself was necessary—risking others being bitten by attempting to catch it! Misidentification is a significant problem, because it can result in the wrong anti-venom being given (as happened in this case).

The RFDS arrived five hours later. Unfortunately, no anti-venom was given to the patient on arrival of the doctor, due to a history of previous horse-serum anaphylaxis (presumably, as a snake collector, he had been given anti-venom before!) During the three-hour flight to Broken Hill, the patient became delirious, and was sedated with chlorpromazine. His respiratory function was said to be adequate in flight. However, on being transferred to the ambulance, he had a cardiac arrest. CPR was started, he was intubated, and given intra-cardiac adrenaline. These measures revived him, and are impressive, given that external cardiac massage was first described in the literature in 1960.[8] Taipan venom causes muscle paralysis, so it is very likely that the arrest was due to hypoxia and high CO_2. Today, we take pulse oximetry and other monitoring for granted!

At Broken Hill Hospital, he was admitted to the ward and connected to a Bird ventilator (see below). He was given 500 units of brown snake anti-venom. Tragically, this was based on the earlier wrong identification of the snake, and would have had no beneficial effect at all. Two days later, he was still unable to breathe without the ventilator, so he was transferred by RFDS to Adelaide. Discharge



Taipan victim attended by St John Ambulance officers and RFDS.[3]

was possible four weeks after being bitten.[1] The two photos show St John Ambulance officers meeting the RFDS plane at Adelaide Airport. The officers included R Stratford and M Giles[3]. Does anyone recognise these names?

Anti-Venom Anti-toxins to diphtheria and tetanus were developed in 1890.[9] By giving small doses of diphtheria or tetanus bacteria to an animal, it develops immunity (i.e. produces specific antibodies). Some plasma from the immunised animal can then be given to a patient, to neutralise the toxin and counteract the life-threatening features of diphtheria or tetanus. A similar principle was, and continues to be, used to develop snake 'anti-venom', commencing with cobra anti-venom in 1895.[9,10,11]

In 1928, Commonwealth Serum Laboratories began this work on a commercial scale in Australia, and by 1930 tiger snake anti-venom was released. This was followed by taipan (1955), brown snake (1956), death adder (1956), black snake (1959) and a polyvalent anti-venom (1962).[11] Today, the massive scale of anti-venom production in Australia is hard to comprehend—supplies are ensured across the length and breadth of our country. This still requires venomous snakes to be bred in captivity and periodically 'milked' of venom. To have your eyes opened about this fascinating process, watch this 8-minute video.

Bird Ventilator The two photographs on the preceding page show that a Bird Mark 7 respirator was in use. It is the box-shaped object connected to the oxygen cylinder (see above right for a colour close-up). This device was the ingenious invention of Forrest Morton Bird (1921–2015), an American aeronautical engineer and medical doctor.[12,13] He served in the military during World War II, and his many inventions began with oxygen apparatus to assist pilots at high altitudes. The Bird Mark 7 was introduced in 1957. It was driven by compressed oxygen, and controlled by two magnets (not electricity). It became the mainstay of mechanical ventilation at the birth of intensive care in the 1960s and 70s, and was also used for pre-hospital care including by NSW Ambulance (although Broken Hill Hospital did not have a formal ICU in 1967, they did have a Bird Mark 7!). Dr Forrest Bird received a long list of awards, including the Presidential Citizen's Medal (the second-highest award in the USA).[12]





The Bird Mark 7 respirator and its inventor, Forrest Morton Bird.

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Dr David Fahey CStJ



WHAT IS HISTORY?

THE QUESTIONS HISTORIANS MUST ASK

When I was a very new cadet journalist on a Melbourne newspaper 70 years ago, the subeditors who processed the reports we cadets wrote sought to train us informally. They insisted that every story we wrote must answer these questions: "Who?", "What?", "Where?", "When?", "Why?" and "How?". These are the journalists' 'five Ws and one H'.

31st instalment from
Dr Ian Howie-Willis KStJ

Like journalists, historians must answer the same basic questions—the 'five Ws and one H'. For example, a historian writing about the origin of St John Ambulance Australia could correctly say that: 'Dr Samuel Knaggs of Newcastle taught Australia's first official St John first aid class in Sydney in 1881; however, Dr James E Neild was responsible for establishing the country's first permanent St John organisation, in Melbourne in 1883. In each case these eminent medical practitioners took the action they did through their concern for improving public health; further, they had the prescience to see that introducing regular public St John first aid training classes would help achieve that goal'. Such a statement ticks all these boxes:

✓ Who? — Drs Knaggs and Neild
✓ What? — the introduction of first aid training in Australia
✓ Where? — in Sydney and Melbourne
✓ When? — during the period 1881–1883
✓ Why? — to raise public health standards
✓ How? — through the introduction of St John Ambulance public training.

While both journalists and historians try to answer the same questions, they do that differently. Thus, the journalist usually has a tight deadline—the next news bulletin or tomorrow's newspaper—whereas the historian often has weeks or months, even years, to think about the subject and complete the writing task. Second, the journalist will write much less about a topic than the historian, who, having more time and space, can probe more deeply and write at greater length. Third, the journalist usually writes about events in a shorter time span, typically the events of the last few hours, whereas the historian often deals in centuries-long series of events. Fourth, the historian usually deals with more complex narratives than the journalist; the former delves more deeply into the past and accordingly deals with more complicated chains of events, plus he/she encounters a larger cast of protagonists/actors. And fifth, the historian is greatly concerned about issues that a journalist might not regard as vitally important.

In relation to the fifth of these, the historian is interested in matters that raise further questions, for instance these:

Cause and effect—what caused these events? Were the outcomes intended or unintentional?
Change and continuity—what changed because of these events? What remained the same? Why?
Impact—who benefited from these events? Who suffered? How did different groups of people — ethnicities, sexes, classes, nationalities — experience these events?
Trustworthiness—how reliable are the sources for writing about these events?
Bias and prejudice—how might the protagonists in the events have been influenced by these factors? Did such factors influence those who have written about the events?
Significance—are the events important? If so, why? If not, why not? And if unimportant, why is the historian bothering with them?
Agenda—why has the historian decided to research and write about these events? Is the historian trying to prove something? Is the historian aware of her/his own biases and prejudices in writing on this topic?
Thesis—what is the 'thesis' or argument about the events that the historian wishes to put to her/his audience?

The quality and value of any historical lecture, article or book is evident in the effectiveness of the historian's dealing with the issues that such questions raise. Like good journalism, good historical writing not only reports events but answer

questions. Good historical writing not only 'ticks all the boxes' implicit in the 'five Ws and one H'; it goes beyond those questions to a deeper level of analysis and interpretation by asking and answering questions like the eight just listed.

Finally, and of course, both historians and journalists should aim to attain high standards in writing accurate, concise, elegant, fluent, expressive, entertaining and instructive prose. As well as the 'five Ws and one H', that's one other responsibility they share.

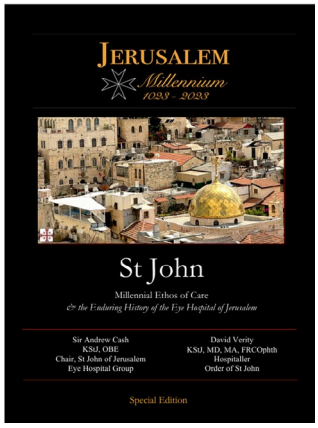
Dr Ian Howie-Willis KStJ

BOOK REVIEW

Jerusalem. Millennium 1023–2023. Millennial ethos of care and the enduring history of the Eye Hospital of Jerusalem

Special Edition 2026. Produced by the St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group and the St John Ophthalmic Association (SOA) under the auspices of Sir Andrew Cash and David Verity.

Download the full book at
www.soa.global/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/St-John-1000-27-2.pdf



This book is a collection of scholarly papers edited by Lyndon da Cruz and Matthew Glozier, which document and celebrate the history of a millennium of care provided in Jerusalem under the banner of the eight-pointed Amalfi cross. It has a secondary title, *St John: Millennial Ethos of Care and the Enduring History of the Eye Hospital of St John of Jerusalem* which is more explanatory of the scope and depth of its reach. There has been long debate as to how far back in history St John can trace its origins in Jerusalem. Many have not been prepared to go back before 1099, and some have settled for somewhere around 1083. This book puts a convincing case for a millennium of care from 1023.

There are twelve papers, one in each chapter, and five appendices which create an enormous store of valuable reference material. The first six chapters provide an extensive historical background to the establishment of the Amalfian Hospice including the philosophy of care, the two St Johns, the history of Jerusalem and Gaza, and the history of bimaristans and eye care in the Levant prior to 1023. The final six chapters chronologically work through the history from 1023 to the current day with a particular focus on the work of the St John Eye Hospital Group.

The authors include a wide range of people including esteemed members of the Order such as Patrick Burgess, as well as those who are clinicians such as David Verity and Sajjid Ahmad, and historians such as Matthew Glozier and a special contribution from Princess Raiyah bint Al-Hussein of Jordan. Two papers came from the Priory of St John in the USA from their Investiture brochures which provide background to the Order and the Eye Hospital Group. The editors have done well to ensure a consistently high standard of accessible text throughout the book.

This book would be valuable for budding historians, and as a resource for divisions to supplement Knowledge of the Order projects. Obviously, the main focus is on Jerusalem and the work of the Eye Hospital through its various clinics and outreach programs, but this is a very important aspect of the work of the Order, internationally and worth being reminded of.

The illustrations are a very integral part of the book, and are as bright and colourful, as they are instructive. Many come from ancient sources and others show the development of the hospital over time to its most recent manifestation. The Jordanian story from the 1950's is particularly instructive, showing the stages of development of the Hospital on Jordanian land in East Jerusalem and describing the sand storm for the laying of the first stone, then a blizzard for the laying of

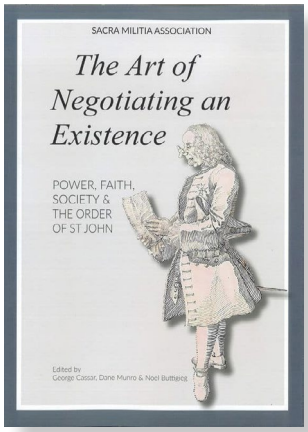
the second stone. The photographs and their legends are a critical part of the value of this whole publication.

While many of our readers will be very familiar with some, if not most, of the material in this book, it is unlikely that all of our readers will be familiar with all of it. As advised, it would be a very good adjunct for new or younger members to develop a knowledge of the Order and particularly the work of the Eye Hospital Group.

Dr Elizabeth Ellis CStJ, Editor

PUBLICATIONS

The Art of Negotiating an Existence: Power, Faith, Society & The Order of St John



Editors: Dane Munro, George Cassar, and Noel Buttigieg.
Published by Sacra Militia Foundation 2026.

Matthew Glozier has contributed a chapter to this relatively new publication, titled 'Holy Family Hospital, Bethlehem: the healthcare flagship of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta in the Holy Land'.

It is available for purchase at the Malta Online Bookshop.

Celebrating Women in St John, 2nd edition. Forthcoming October 2026



St John Australia are inviting nominations for a future online publication that will recognise Australian St John women who have made an outstanding contribution and created a meaningful impact in their communities and the organisation.

Criteria

The nominee must:

- Be or has been part of St John (as a Member of the Order, staff member or volunteer)
- Be someone who identifies as female (or did, at the time of their impact)
- Have at least one image that can be shared as part of the publication.

Please note:

- You may self-nominate if you identify as female.
- All nominations will be carefully considered. However, nomination does not guarantee publication!
- By nominating, you also give permission for editing your story to house style. If there are substantial changes, you will be consulted.
- It will be a digital publication only.

Nominations are still open and you may lodge your nomination by completing the online survey. Click here to access the survey site. Any queries please email gabrielle.lhuede@stjohn.org.au

MEMBERSHIP FOR 2026–2027

We remind you to renew your Historical Society membership subscription for this financial year, 2026–2027 if you which to continue your benefits as a member. As a paid-up member, you receive three issues of *Pro Utilitate*, a copy of *St John History*, discounted attendance fee for the Seminar and, not to mention, access to a wealth of information on the ancient and modern history of our international Order.

Please subscribe or renew on our Membership online platform: https://sjahistoricalsociety.tidyhq.com/

You will also find on this platform, the opportunity to make a donation to the Society, and notice of all forthcoming events.

AND FINALLY ...

The next 2026 issue (December 2026) has a deadline for contributions by Sunday 15 November. Without your contributions of letters, articles, and historical ideas, *PU* would not be nearly as valuable as it is. Thank you so very much.

Yours in service,

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